

November 29, 2005

SUBJECT: Performance Cycle Ending December 31, 2005

TO: All CSREES Employees

FROM: Colien Hefferan
Administrator

This memo describes the procedures to be used for finalizing performance appraisals and awards for the January 1, 2005 - December 31, 2005 performance cycle.

Please pay particular attention to the information pertaining to: 1) employee lists required with submission of appraisal/award packages, 2) Quality Step Increase (QSI) eligibility, 3) Time Off awards as performance recognition, 4) documentation to be sent to the Human Resources Division (HRD), and 5) the due date for receipt of appraisals and awards.

- Each employee will be rated by their immediate supervisor (rating official). Each rating official will finalize the rating with the reviewing official (typically the second level supervisor). A summary of ratings from each unit will be compiled for the Office of the Administrator (due January 25, 2006) and reviewed by the Executive Council (scheduled for January 30, 2006). Once these reviews have taken place and ratings have been approved, the rating officials will then hold formal performance discussions with employees. The purpose of Administrator and Executive Council review of summary ratings is to ensure that each employee receives a rating, compare/evaluate to the achievement of overall Agency goals, identify trends, and resolve any apparent issues.
- Each employee will be required to prepare a 1-2 page accomplishment report. **Accomplishment reports are due to supervisors no later than January 13, 2006.** The report should be formatted by performance element and focus on the specific accomplishment, as well as its impact on the process/work, client/customer, or unit/organization. Employees may find it useful to refer back to previous accomplishment reports, activity or status reports, and/or calendars in preparing accomplishment reports. Accomplishment reports serve as a reminder to supervisors and employees of specific individual and/or group achievements, contributions, and accomplishments within a rating cycle. Supervisors will use personal observation of employee performance, written accomplishment reports, and/or feedback from various sources to determine an employee's rating of record.
- **HRD will provide training to new employees (and those who would like a refresher) on the preparation of accomplishment reports on December 14, 2005, at 9:30 a.m. in 1410 Waterfront and January 4, 2006, at 9:30 a.m. in 1410 Waterfront.** If you plan to attend one of these sessions, please send your name, telephone number and session you plan to attend via e-mail to Tbailey@ars.usda.gov.
- The following levels of performance are defined to provide clarification. Supervisors should communicate these definitions to their employees.

Fully Successful - Fully Successful performance is good performance. Work performed at this level is of good quality, the expected quantity, and is accomplished within the established deadlines or time frames.

Exceeds Fully Successful - Performance which consistently exceeds the performance standards established for the Fully Successful level.

- CSREES will continue to recognize *Superior* and *Outstanding* performance. Employees who receive a *Superior* rating of record may receive either a performance award or time off award of 24 hours. Employees who receive an *Outstanding* rating of record may receive either a performance award, QSI, or time off award of 40 hours. If considering time off, please refer to <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/awards/files/table-monetary-non-montary.pdf> for policy guidance.

Employees who have received a QSI in the past 52 weeks or have been promoted or reassigned to a different position near the end of the rating cycle are not eligible to receive a QSI. Supervisors should contact HRD if they plan to give any QSIs. Each year, performance award amounts are determined by the Office of the Administrator and the Executive Council based upon annual appropriations and operating funds. Performance awards amounts for 2005 have not yet been determined. Performance awards will be pro-rated for employees who have been employed with CSREES for less than one year.

- CSREES will continue the use of spot, extra effort, time off and non-monetary token awards to recognize efforts during the rating cycle.
- Supervisors should encourage and recognize team and group efforts.
- Performance management policy document, P&P 435.1 - CSREES Performance Planning and Appraisal, can be found on www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/435-1.htm for reference purposes.

Completion of Performance Appraisals (AD-435P)

Performance Appraisals (AD-435P) will be completed using the electronic version of the form, available on www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/wpforms.htm. Units may make the necessary changes to employee AD-435P forms that were saved on disk last year. Each Deputy Administrator will receive an employee list from HRD that will provide the employee information necessary to update/complete the upper section of each AD-435P. Once the form is completed and printed, each individual AD-435P should, again, be saved to disk and retained for use for future performance cycles. Since the disk will contain sensitive information, please keep the disk in a secure place and/or password protect the documents on disk or in your system, when saving.

This year, the employee lists received must be documented and returned to HRD with the unit's appraisal/award packages. Upon completion of appraisals, supervisors must document the list (in space provided) indicating the appraisal "is attached" or is "not attached" and if "not attached", a reason must be given, i.e. employee's cycle was extended through (date) or employee reported (date) and will be rated next cycle, etc. The list must be completed and submitted along with all unit appraisal/award packages. All unit documentation should come as one package to HRD. Appraisals should not be sent to HRD separately. This is now being required for accountability purposes. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is requiring agencies to better track performance appraisals of its employees.

Employees who have been under performance elements and standards (PE/S) for at least 90 days must receive an appraisal using the AD-435P. Those excluded include student assistant appointees, employees in full-time training, employees who are on intermittent work schedules, and employees on temporary appointments limited to one year or less. Performance cycles for employees who have not been covered under PE/S for the 90 day minimum appraisal period are normally extended. The information below describes how extension of performance cycles will be handled. The reason for this policy is so that employees in these situations who are eligible for performance awards, get included in the annual agency allocation for performance awards. Please call HRD if there are other situations which require policy determinations.

1) Employees new to CSREES who will not be covered under PE/S by the end of the performance cycle (December 31, 2005) will have their cycle extended if they meet the 90 days and can be rated by January 22, 2006. If an employee cannot be rated by January 22, 2006, the employee will receive their first rating of record at the end of the next performance cycle (December 31, 2006). Since the performance cycle for employees in this situation is longer, supervisors should consider scheduling an additional progress review to provide the employee with important performance feedback.

2) Employees who were put on new PE/S later in the performance cycle due to promotion or reassignment and who will not be covered under those PE/S by the end of the performance cycle (December 31, 2005), will have their cycle extended if they meet the 90 days and can be rated by January 22, 2006. If an employee cannot be rated by January 22, 2006, the employee will be rated based on their performance in the previous position.

NOTE: Employees who have retired or separated and were covered under a certified performance plan for at least 90 days in the rating cycle should be appraised and receive a performance award if their rating warrants. Employees must submit an accomplishment report, preferably before their departure.

In order to effectively assist an employee receiving a *Less Than Fully Successful* summary rating, supervisors should contact their servicing Employee Relations Specialist immediately upon making that determination.

A written justification providing the details concerning an employee's performance must accompany the AD-435P form to HRD if:

- 1) Any one element is rated *Does Not Meet Fully Successful*, or
- 2) The rating of record is *Outstanding*. Employee accomplishment reports will serve as justification for *Outstanding* ratings.

Completion of Award Forms (AD-287-2)

A "Recommendation and Approval of Awards" form (Form AD-287-2) must be prepared for each award nomination.

Cash awards over \$500 and Time Off awards over 10 hours require a written justification. If written justification is provided for the performance rating as indicated above, you do not need to provide another one for the award. HRD is requiring one justification for the performance rating/award package as indicated in "Documentation to HRD" below. An award justification may be a narrative description (achievement, role, and impact), or an employee's accomplishment report.

Cash awards of \$500 or less, require no written justification.

A QSI may be recommended only for those employees who receive an "Outstanding" rating, who have not received a QSI within the last 52 weeks, and who have not been promoted or reassigned to a different position near the end of the performance cycle. QSI's are given in the position and at the grade level for which performance was assessed. A copy of the justification provided for the "Outstanding" rating will be sufficient documentation for the QSI. QSI's to the 4th and 7th steps of a grade, extend the employee's current within-grade waiting period by one year. For specific questions regarding QSI's, refer to your servicing Human Resources Specialist or to this office.

Since performance awards, time off awards, and QSI's are based upon the annual performance rating, an employee may not be recommended for more than one award in this category. Recognizing specific accomplishments or achievements during this time period with other awards, such as extra effort or non-monetary, is permitted.

A citation must be provided in Block 11 of AD-287-2 for performance recognition. The following citation is recommended:

"This award is based upon an official performance appraisal rating of (*Superior or Outstanding*) for the rating period January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005."

Documentation to HRD

Please follow these instructions carefully as procedures have changed.

One package, to include the appraisal and award, is to be sent to HRD for each employee. Each should contain the following and be stapled together in the following order:

- 1) Original AD-287-2
- 2) Original AD-435P

- 3) Performance Rating/Award Justification
- 4) Performance Plan Cover Sheet, if used
- 5) AD-435A/B or Performance Plan

NOTE: Employee list must be submitted with unit's appraisal/award packages.

Please do not send Individual Development Plans (IDPs), training forms, lists of publications, or other management documents to HRD in this package. These are not required documents in the Employee Performance File and will not be filed if received.

Please send employee listing and all employee appraisal and award packages to the following address no later than February 24, 2006. Completed award packages in by this date will be made effective March 5, 2006, and paid out in March 27, 2006, pay checks.

Documentation must be sent to:

Theresa Bailey
USDA/ARS/Human Resources Division
Performance and Awards Staff
5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Room 3-1148B
Beltsville, MD 20705-5107

Performance Cycle Beginning January 1, 2006

A separate memo will be distributed describing the process for establishing performance plans for the rating cycle beginning January 1, 2006.

Contact

Questions regarding performance appraisal and awards policy or procedures may be referred to Theresa Bailey on 301-504-1452. Rating officials should refer any performance problems which may result in a *Less Than Fully Successful* rating, to their servicing Employee Relations Specialist.

cc:

K. Brownell, HRD
K. Hoyle, HRD
Employee Relations Branch, HRD
Metropolitan Services Branch, HRD
Performance and Awards Staff, HRD